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AUTHOR Kamin, Jonathan; Erickson, Donald A.
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ABSTRACT

A 1978 survey in British Columbia of 993 mostly urban parents, with children in 121 public and private schools, sought to discover the ways they chose their children's schools, the qualities they desired in those schools, and the effects on their choice of a new provincial aid program. The factors examined included social class, income, occupation, education, religion, number of schools considered, sources of information, amount of thought given to the choice, degree of involvement of various family members in the decision, and reasons for the selection made. Among the findings were that social class affected the type of school chosen, the family members involved, and other factors, but did not affect the reasons for the choice or the number of schools considered. Reasons for choosing private schools centered on religion, discipline, and academic quality, while those for choosing public schools tended to involve convenience or school location. A small, but significant, number of parents, of low social status and educated in public schools, gave little thought to school selection and tended to choose public schools for their children. The new aid program had little effect on parent choice, as it had just begun at the time of the survey. (Author/RW)

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PARENT CHOICE OF SCHOOLING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

By

Jonathan Kamin
Research Specialist
Institute for the Study of Private Schools

and

Donald A. Erickson
Director
Institute for the Study of Private Schools

Prepared for presentation at a symposium on "Empirical and Practical Perspectives on Aid to Private Schools" at the 1981 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, California, April 16, 1981.

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ABSTRACT

A survey of 993 parents was conducted in British Columbia in 1978 to discover the ways they went about choosing schools for their children and the qualities they sought in those schools, as well as the effect of the new provincial aid program on their choice.

Degree of involvement of various family members in the decision, sources of information consulted, time of decision, and number of schools considered were examined. Those who chose independent schools of various types were compared with each other and with those who chose public schools. Those entering a child in a school were compared with those who transferred a child from a previous school. Social class was found to have a significant effect on some, but not all variables.

Reasons for choosing various types of schools were compared among these same groups. Reasons for choosing independent schools tended to center on religion, discipline, and academic quality, while those for choosing public schools more often mentioned reasons having to do with convenience or school location, with a variety of other reasons.

A small but significant portion of the sample indicated that they gave little thought to school selection. They were characterized largely by public school education and low social status, and tended overwhelmingly to choose public schools. The aid program was found to have no effect, as it had just begun at the time of the survey.

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This paper[1] reports the highlights of a survey conducted in British Columbia in November 1978. A more comprehensive presentation of the results of that survey[2] has been presented to the British Columbia Ministry of Education and to the National Institute of Education, which provided the funds for the work. While it has not yet been released to the general public, it is available to scholars on request.[3]

Data for the present analysis were obtained in two ways. In November 1978, 993 parents in the province, drawn from its major population center (the Lower Fraser Valley) and from one small hinterland city (Prince George) were interviewed by telephone. The following spring, those parents who agreed to let us contact them again (over 9? percent of the sample) were surveyed by means of mailed questionnaires.

A. The Sample

The sample was selected from among parents who had, in September 1978, either enrolled a child in the first grade of an elementary or secondary school, or transferred a child from a public to an independent school or vice-versa. We called the former group the starters, and the latter group the movers. We deliberately over-sampled movers and independent school parents, in order to achieve a roughly equal number of public school movers, public school starters, independent school movers, and independent school starters.

Two purposes informed our sampling procedure. First, we wanted to be able to make comparisons between movers and starters, and between public and independent school parents. Since there are fewer movers and

independent school parents than there are starters and public school parents, it was necessary to include a disproportion of them in the sample in order to have nearly equal numbers. Secondly, we sampled only movers and starters, and not those who remained in a school, because we believed that these parents, having recently chosen schools for their children, were the parents most likely to have been influenced by the new program of aid to independent schools, which had begun only two months before.

However, as our analysis of the data proceeded, it became clear that the most interesting comparisons were not generally those among the four groups we specifically sampled. For some purposes, the public-independent distinction was most salient, for others, the mover-starter distinction. On the other issues, more light was shed by distinguishing between parents whose children were enrolled in different types of independent schools, or between parents of different religious or social class backgrounds. Therefore, our findings are not, in the main, presented in terms of our four original subsamples.

Since we purposely oversampled certain groups of parents, and did not sample other groups at all, our results may not be typical of the general population of the province. Indeed, comparisons with the demography of the province indicate that our sample is in many ways not representative of the population, particularly in that it over-represents the middle class and under-represents the working class.[4] This effect is in part a consequence of the refusal of the public schools in Vancouver to participate, which eliminated the only typically urban public school system in the intended sample. This action probably also eliminated a fair proportion of parents at the low end of the social scales.

Our sample was drawn from 93 public schools, and 28 independent

schools, which included 15 Catholic schools, one non-sectarian independent school, and a number of other independent schools which we characterized as "other church-related schools." It is a bit of a disappointment that only one non-sectarian independent school participated in the study, as no conclusions can be drawn from a sample of one. However, results from this school are so consistent and interesting that they are included for heuristic purposes.

We discovered clear differences in parents patronizing schools of different types in our sample. Though all social classes were present in public schools, patrons of these schools, as compared with schools of other types, were more likely to be blue collar and working class, public-school educated, and not graduated from secondary school, but with high incomes. (The high incomes were partly a function, apparently, of British Columbia's militant trade unionism.) The one non-sectarian independent school in our sample was patronized by people of high income, high social class, high occupational status, a high degree of educational attainment, and backgrounds in independent schools. However, one should not assume it is necessarily a highly exclusive school, as its respondents were of high status only in relation to the sample. The patrons were generally upper-middle class. Parents in the sample whose children were in non-Catholic church-related schools tended to be middle income, of middle occupational status, and lower-middle class. They were somewhat more likely than parents in the other independent schools to have been educated in public schools exclusively and, like the parents with children in public schools, more likely not to have graduated from secondary school. In keeping with the frequent claims of Catholic leaders, the Catholic school patrons in our

sample resembled public school patrons, except that more of the former had attended college or university, and they were somewhat less concentrated at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale.

There was a very high proportion of Catholics in the Catholic schools, a fairly high proportion in the public schools, and a small proportion in the other types.

We found striking differences in social class between movers and starters: movers were almost equally distributed among the working, lower-middle, and upper-middle classes, while starters were primarily working class, with slightly fewer in the lower middle class and much fewer in the upper middle class. The movers included a greater proportion of professional or executive fathers than did the starters, and fewer blue-collar fathers. There was also a slight, but consistent, tendency for movers to be better educated. Most mover parents, of both sexes, were college educated, and fewer reported only secondary school education or less. We hypothesize that one explanation for this social class difference between movers and starters is that individuals with higher status generally have superior social skills, have greater access to information, are accustomed to demanding above-average goods and services, and have more of a sense of control over their own destinies. If so, these people would be more aware of educational alternatives, and more likely to move if they were to become discontented with their children's schools.

When independent school movers (who had left public schools) were compared with public school starters, the social class differences were even greater. These subsamples had an equally large percentage of parents

with high incomes, but more parents who had transferred children from public to independent schools were upper-middle class, and fewer were working class, more were in higher level occupations, and more had higher levels of education. These data, along with evidence from analyses too detailed to report here, suggest that higher social status not only increases the likelihood that parents will shift their children from one school to another, but that the shift will be from public to independent schools. Social class does not appear to be an important determinant of who will transfer a child from an independent to a public school.

Another possible determinant of parental choice of schooling appears in our data on the educational background of the parents themselves. The type of schooling a parent <u>received</u>--whether in independent schools, public schools, or both--may have influenced the choice of a school for the parent's child. Parents who had just enrolled their children in public schools were overwhelmingly educated in public schools only (80 percent), while parents who had just enrolled their children in independent schools included a higher percentage of individuals who themselves had attended only independent schools (35 percent) than was found in any other subsample.

Interestingly, both public school and independent school movers had a higher incidence of parents who had attended <u>both</u> independent and public schools than did the starters. Probably first-hand experience in schools of both types increases one's awareness that if a school of one type is unsatisfactory, the other type of school is available as an alternative.

B. The Process of Choosing a School

Since aid to independent schools could conceivably influence the manner in which parents choose schools, we asked about the process by which parents chose the schools which their children entered during September, 1978. In a later survey of this type, we have attempted to detect any changes in this process that can logically be attributed to the provincial aid to independent schools.

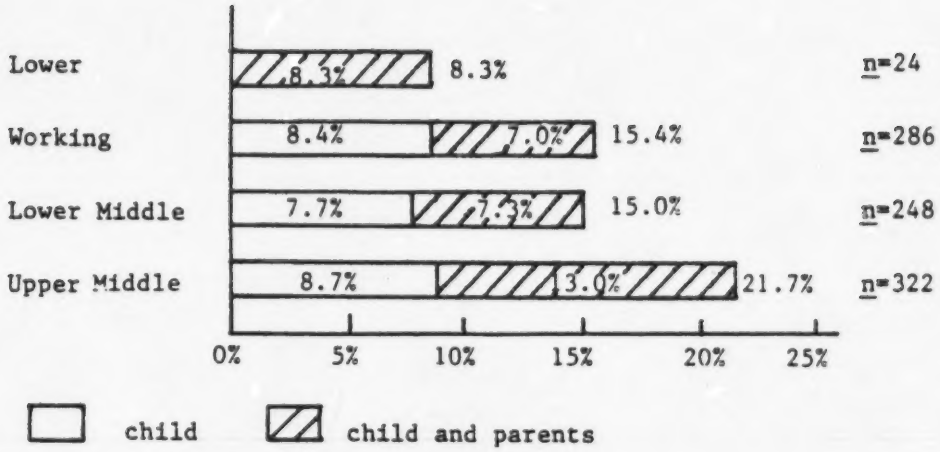
Our interview schedule included questions about such things as what prompted the decision, how long ago it was made, what sources of information were consulted, what information was obtained from those sources, and how conveniently the school was located, among other matters.

Who Influenced the Choice?

Approximately 88 percent of our sample indicated that there had been discussion within the family concerning the choice of a school. There was a non-significant correlation between the tendency to have such discussions and the size of the fees charged by the various groups of schools. Not surprisingly, movers were more likely to discuss the issue than starters.

Most often the decision was made by both parents jointly, but when one parent predominated, it was more likely to be the mother, most especially in the choice of a Catholic school. The choice of a non-sectarian independent school, however, was most likely to be made by the father, perhaps because of a greater awareness of the advantages of "connections."

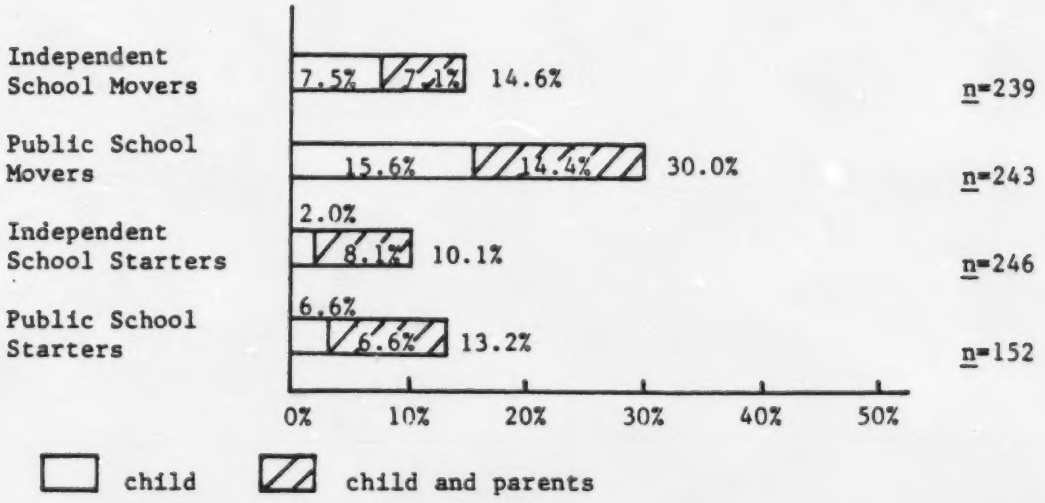
The extent to which the child was involved in the decision varied directly with social class, as Figure 1 demonstrates. This variation is



Chi^2=21.11858 with 15 degrees of freedom. n.s.

Figure 1

Proportion of families allowing the child to influence choice of school, comparing social classes (n=total respondents to question in class.)



Chi^2=73.87036 with 15 degrees of freedom. $p < .0001$

Figure 2

Proportion of families allowing the child to influence the choice of school, comparing public and independent movers and starters (n=total respondents to question in category.)

a reflection of well documented class differences. Kohn, for example, points out that working class families tend to raise their children with the values of neatness, obedience, and conformity, especially to external proscription.[5] In this type of family setting, which has been called "adult-centered,"[6] parents tend to make decisions for the children and expect them to be obeyed.

In contrast, the "adult-directed" upper-middle class values independence and self-direction in its children more than it does obedience.[7] It is not uncommon for members of this class to consult even young children about decisions which affect them.[8] Since they value education as a means toward personal development and self-expression, and tend more than any other class to "be deliberate and self-conscious about their choices,"[9] what better way to maximize these qualities than to involve the child in a decision having far-reaching effects on his or her development?

Perhaps also involved may be a greater awareness by high-status parents that any school's effectiveness is strongly influenced by the attitudes that children bring with them; if so, these parents may be involving their children in the choice of a school as a way of eliciting commitment to the school that is chosen.

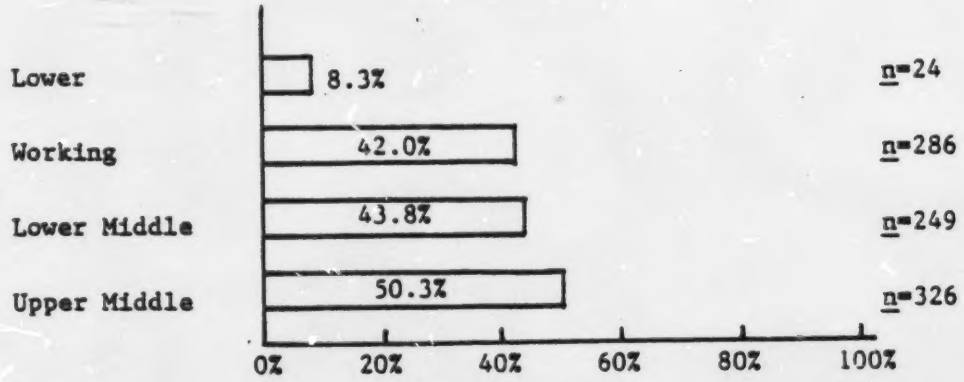
The frequent involvement of the child in the decision to move to a public school is easy to explain (see Figure 2), since in many cases the move would disrupt some of the child's friendships. But why should the child's involvement be linked more to public school choices than to independent school choices? One reason may be that public schools, being much more numerous than independent schools, enroll a far greater proportion of school-age children and are located closer to most children's homes, and thus are attended by most children's neighborhood friends. One would

expect most children to want to attend the schools where most of their friends are found. Furthermore, as we shall see shortly, students who say they are unhappy with their present school usually indicate that they hanker for things most likely to be found in public schools, not independent schools--such as a wider range of courses, programs, or extracurricular activities; less strict discipline; less academic pressure; and coeducational classes.

It may also be true that parents who themselves prefer public schools are more likely to make the choice indirectly, by letting the child choose. These interpretations are merely possibilities, not demonstrated by our data. They need further investigation.[10]

Gathering Information

Unlike discussion within the family, the tendency to discuss the matter outside the family varied sharply with social class (as indicated by Figure 3), with such discussion becoming increasingly frequent at higher class levels. This behavior was also closely associated with the type of school chosen. The choice of a Catholic school was least likely to be discussed outside the family, and the choice of a non-sectarian independent school most likely. It appears reasonable to assume that, for many Catholic families, the choice of a Catholic school would be strongly a matter of family tradition, requiring little outside discussion. In contrast, the high fees charged by the non-sectarian school in our sample seem to suggest that parents choosing this school might be especially interested in assuring themselves that they were getting value for their investment. On the other hand, since this school's patrons were overwhelmingly middle class, this



Chi^2=17.94600 with 3 degrees of freedom. p =.0005

Figure 3

Proportion of parents discussing decision with persons outside the family, comparing social classes (n=total respondents to question in category.)

relationship might be an artifact of class. Not surprisingly, decision to transfer was discussed far more often than an initial enrollment decision.

Whenever a parent said the choice of a school had been discussed outside the family, we asked who outside the family had been consulted. Of the parents who responded to this question 50 percent said they had talked with parents who had children in the school. Many (28 percent) also talked with educators to get information on the decision. These data are summarized in Figure 4.

We were interested to discover that parents often said they talked

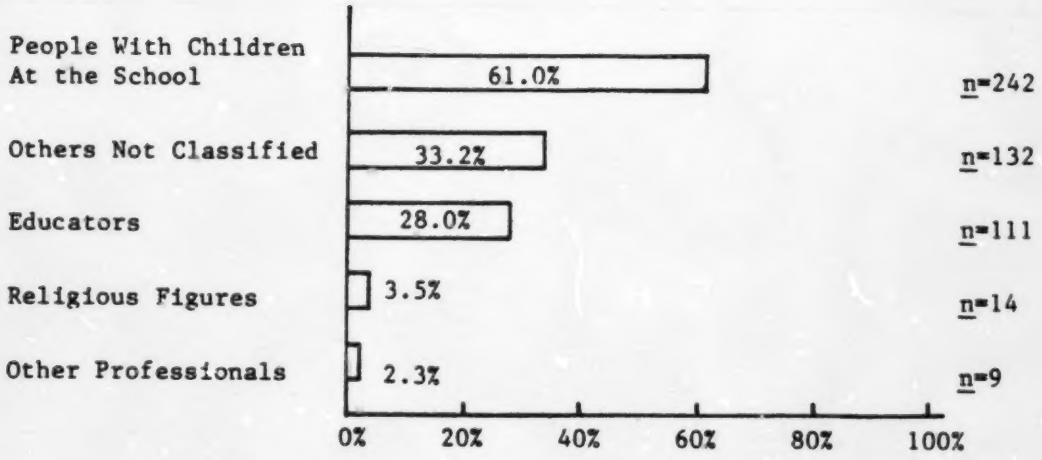


Figure 4

Proportion of parents mentioning each type of person with whom decision was discussed (n=respondents mentioning this type of person. n=397)

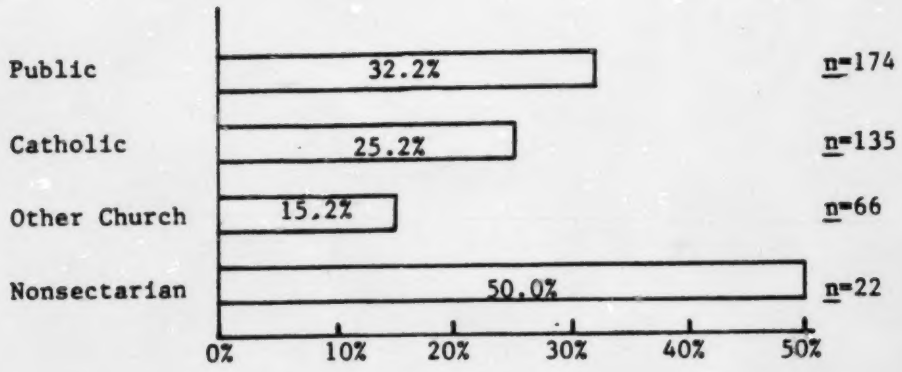


Figure 5

Proportion of respondents who said that they talked with educators, comparing parents in four types of school (n=total respondents to question in category.)

with educators in the schools their children had left (possibly to confirm that the child was not doing well, or that conditions were not likely to improve). However, there are important differences between patrons of the various types of schools in the degree to which they consulted educators, as Figure 5 shows.

The extremes in the distribution are to be expected. The parents who selected the non-sectarian independent school were far more likely than any others to choose the school for its academic quality, as a later section of this report makes clear. It seems reasonable to assume that educators would be the people most likely to have reliable information about that aspect of a school.

On the other hand, those who chose the non-Catholic church-related schools (the majority of which are Evangelical), have quite a different approach to the matter. They often transfer their children out of public schools in order to protect them from secular influences. Concomitant with that attitude may be a sense that professional educators are usurping the prerogatives of parents, especially in the area of moral education, and may surreptitiously be alienating these children from their parents' values. Any special professional competence asserted by professional educators may possibly be seen by this group as an ideology to justify the assertion of power. If so, these parents would be less likely than others to turn to educators for advice about schools.[11] We will attempt to obtain data to illuminate the several aspects of this point in future studies.

When we asked whether parents had been influenced by such public information sources as literature from the school, the mass media, and sermons or speeches in church, 185 parents responded. As Figure 6 shows,

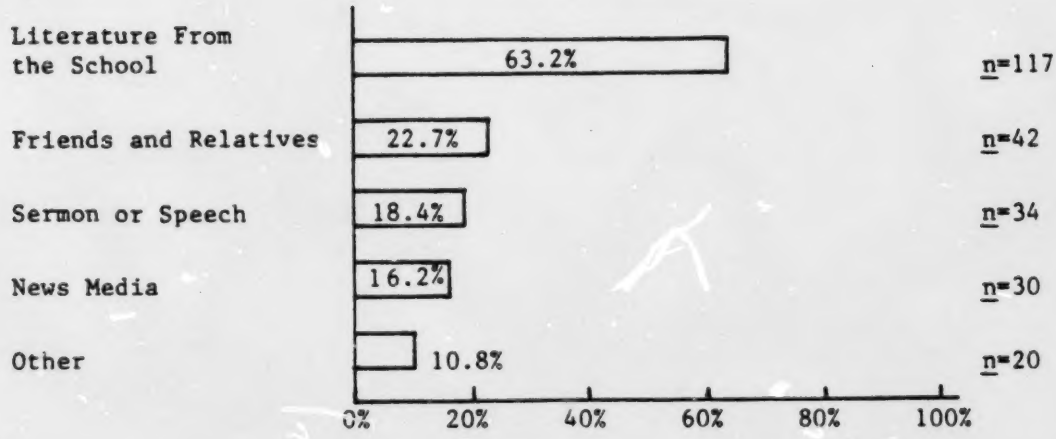


Figure 6

Proportion of respondents naming various sources of influence on their school choice (n=respondents naming given source. n=185)

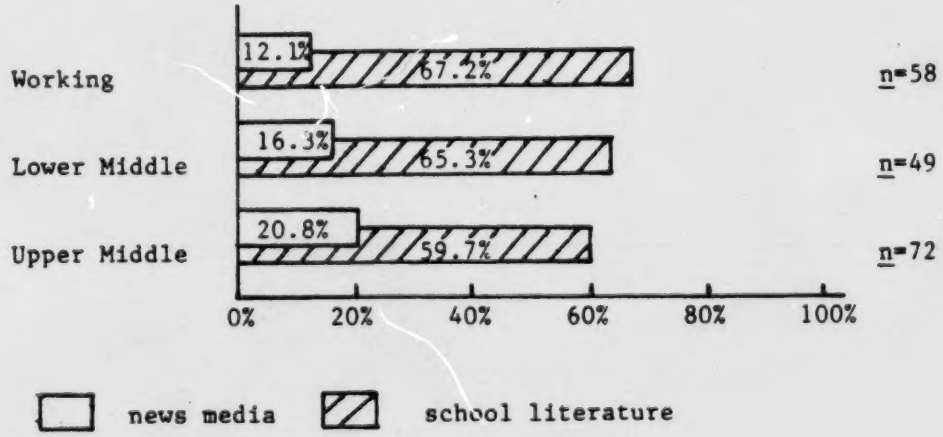


Figure 7

Proportion of respondents from three social classes indicating influence of news media and literature from the school (n=total respondents to question in class. Lower class omitted.)

of these, 63 percent said they had been influenced by school literature, 23 percent volunteered that they had been influenced by talks with friends and relatives (we had not specifically asked about this), 18 percent said they had been influenced by a sermon or speech in church, and 16 percent said they had been influenced by the mass media.

The influence of school literature was inversely related to social class, perhaps because higher-status parents are more wary of what schools advertise about themselves. The influence of the mass media exhibited an opposite relationship; parents of higher status used the media as a source of information on which to base the choice of a school more than did parents of lower status, as indicated in Figure 7. Many parents of children in church-related schools (30 to 33 percent) said they had been influenced by a sermon or speech in church. Patrons of the non-sectarian independent school were more likely than patrons of other schools to have consulted with people who had children in the school.

There was a pronounced tendency for Catholics who chose Catholic schools to be influenced by public information sources quite different from the sources that influenced Catholics in other schools, as indicated by Table 1. Although the numbers are small, the variations are quite striking. For example, Catholics in Catholic schools were much less likely to have been influenced by school literature, possibly because Catholic schools infrequently distribute literature about themselves. Also, as anyone would predict, Catholics in Catholic schools were much more likely to have been influenced by sermons and speeches in church.

There is a noteworthy relationship between the type of school eventually chosen and the conduit of information from which one is willing to

Table 1

Proportion of Catholic Parents Naming Various Sources of Influence on their School Choice

Source	CATHOLICS				All Others	
	In Catholic Schools		In Other Schools			
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
News media	36.8	(14)	9.7	(3)	8.8	(10)
School literature	42.1	(16)	93.5	(29)	63.2	(72)
Sermon or speech	39.5	(15)	0.0	(0)	16.7	(19)
Friends and relatives	13.2	(5)	12.9	(4)	28.9	(33)
Other	5.3	(2)	12.9	(4)	12.3	(14)
TOTALS		38		31		114

Table 2

Sources of Influence on School Choice, Comparing Parents in Four Types of School

Source	Public		Catholic		Other Church		Nonsectarian	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
News media	7.9	(6)	32.0	(16)	15.6	(7)	7.1	(1)
School literature	73.7	(56)	52.0	(26)	53.3	(24)	78.6	(11)
Sermon or speech	5.3	(4)	30.0	(15)	33.3	(15)	0.0	(0)
Friends and relatives	25.0	(19)	20.0	(10)	17.8	(8)	35.7	(5)
Other	17.1	(13)	4.0	(2)	12.5	(5)	0.0	(0)
TOTALS		76		50		40		14

accept influence, as Table 2 demonstrates.

Three quarters of the parents with children in schools with no church affiliation (both public and independent) cited literature from the schools, whereas only half of those with children attending church-related schools were influenced by this type of material. Many of those in church-related schools were influenced by a sermon or speech in church. Those in non-Catholic church-related schools were least likely, and those in the non-sectarian independent school most likely, to consult with friends and relatives.

Perhaps the latter contrast reflects the tendency of those in the higher strata to have access to more social networks than others, and that of the Evangelicals to be wary of those who do not share their religious convictions.

Movers differed notably from starters in the sources they consulted for information about schools. Movers in general were much more likely than starters to be influenced by school literature, public school movers more so than independent school movers. Independent school starters were considerably less likely than the others to have been influenced by literature from the school, paying more attention to sermons or speeches. Public school starters were the group most likely to be influenced by friends and relatives, and independent school starters the group most likely to be influenced by the news media.

One would expect movers to consult sources different from those sought out by starters. Movers were going through the selection process a second time, probably because they were unhappy with their first choice. Thus, they might be inclined to seek out sources of information other than

those that led to their first choice. The data support the supposition that independent school starters (all of whom in our sample chose church-related schools) first chose the school on advice from religious sources. When some found the results less than satisfactory, for whatever reason, they sought another school. Perhaps, therefore, the active search for an alternative accounts for the fact that the movers, and the public school movers in particular, were strongly inclined to consult school literature.

Other Aspects of the Process

As the work of Herbert Simon would lead one to predict, few parents in the sample scanned the horizon broadly for alternatives before selecting a school.[12] Over three quarters of the sample considered no more than two schools when making their decision. Parents selecting church-related schools were more likely to have considered three schools or more than were parents who selected either public schools or the non-sectarian independent school. Except for the fact that lower-class parents were more likely than those from higher strata to consider only one school when making their choice, there were no notable social class differences in the number of schools considered. This tendency of most parents to consider only one or two schools at a time may also help to account for the reliance on school literature by movers.

It seems reasonable to assume that the more important a decision is considered, the more advance planning it will receive. If parents considered the choice of a school to be of great moment, one might anticipate that deliberations would begin well in advance. Our data on the point indicate that, not surprisingly, movers (who were choosing a second school)

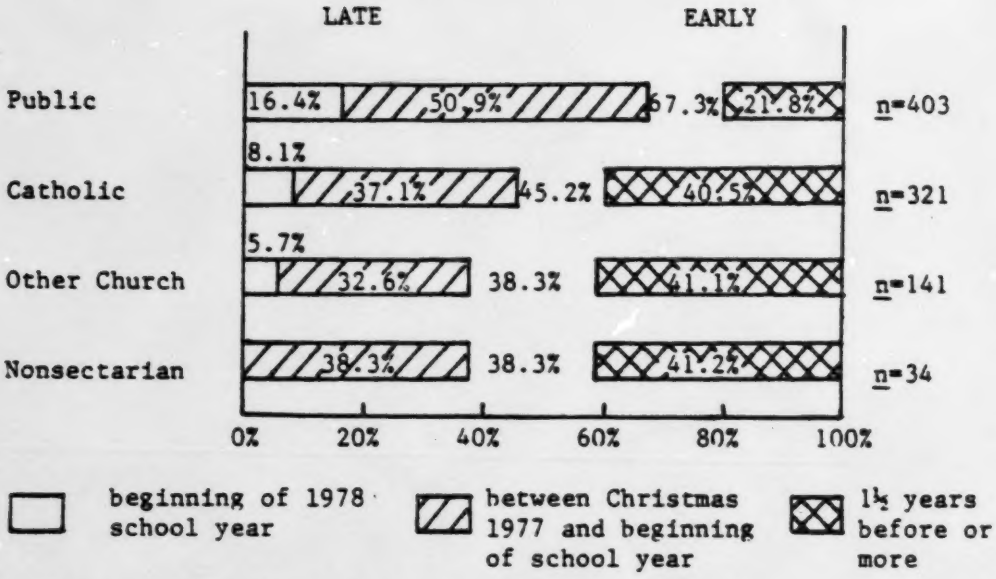
had made the decision later than starters. Independent school starters were most likely to make the decision furthest in advance.

Regarding the four types of schools in our sample, those who chose public schools were most likely to leave the decision until the beginning of the school year, although few waited so long. The majority reached a decision between the previous Christmas and the summer. Catholic school parents were somewhat more forethoughted. Those choosing the non-sectarian school were earliest in their decision, as Figure 8 demonstrates. Since all those in our sample who chose this school, were, due to a procedural quirk, movers, this suggests that many must have been on a waiting list.

C. Do All Parents Give Equal Attention to School Selection?

One important question asked of all respondents was, "If you could send (child) to any school in your area, is (present school) the one you would choose, or have you given the matter much thought?" Those who replied that they hadn't given the matter much thought we termed "unthinking." (The rest, the "thinking" respondents, were divided into "satisfied" and "frustrated" groups, depending on whether their child was in the school of their choice.) Unfortunately, due to a procedural error, we do not have complete data concerning the unthinking starters.

Table 3 compares the thinking and unthinking respondents' choices of schools. It is important to note that, since our sample is not a population sample, the figures do not reflect the population as a whole. To be more specific, if the difference between the thinking and the unthinking were a matter of chance, we would expect that about half of each



Chi^2=82.76143 with 15 degrees of freedom. $p < .0001$

Figure 8

Proportion of parents making early and late school selections, comparing four types of schools (n=total respondents to question in category.)

Table 3

Type of School Chosen by Thinking and Unthinking Respondents

Type of School	Unthinking		Thinking	
	%	(n)	%	(n)
Public	90.5	(124)	43.1	(366)
Catholic	8.0	(11)	36.6	(311)
Other church	1.5	(2)	16.3	(138)
Non-sectarian independent	0.0	(0)	4.0	(34)
TOTALS		137		849

group would have chosen public schools (since half of our respondents were drawn from public schools), and the rest, various types of independent school. In fact, the unthinking disproportionately chose public schools.

This by no means should be interpreted as a slur on the public schools. A public school is in fact the least problematic and easiest of all the possible choices. It involves no financial outlay; it is the type of school chosen by the majority; attendance is in keeping with the democratic ideal, whereas the other choices are regarded by many people as elitist. Further, public schools are provided by the province and are available to all. It would be quite surprising if those who gave little thought to selecting schools for their children chose anything but a public school. On the other hand, the tendency for more of the unthinking to choose public schools may identify a handicap under which public schools are forced to operate. If serious parental thought about, and involvement in, a school is an important factor in a school's success, then by making public

schools easy for parents to select (by removing all of the monetary costs) and more accessible to parents who are not inclined to take education seriously, governments in many parts of the world may have helped make success more difficult to achieve for public schools.

Parents who said they had not given much thought to their choice of a school turned out to be different from thinking parents in numerous respects. As compared with the thinking, the unthinking, according to our data, were:

(a) much more likely to send their children to public schools,

(b) more likely to be members of the working class,

(c) more likely to have blue collar occupations,

(d) more likely, if mothers, to be keeping house rather than working outside the home,

(e) less likely to have experienced any postsecondary schooling, or even to have finished secondary school,

(f) more likely to have been educated exclusively in public schools,

(g) less likely to have discussed the choice of a school with someone outside the family,

(h) twice as likely to have let the child influence the choice of a school,

(i) more likely to have considered only one school,

(j) far more likely to have sent the child to the school that most of the child's friends attended,

(k) more likely to have left the choice of a school to a point near the beginning of the school term, and

(l) much more likely to explain their choice in terms of convenience or the child's own preference.

The results of this analysis give additional support to our hypothesis that social class is a strong determinant of the exercise of parental

choice of where children will be educated.

When examined together with the social class data for each type of school, the difference between thinking and unthinking parents makes it even more evident that parents from higher social classes are more likely to lean toward independent schools. Over 90 percent of parents in our sample, in each type of independent school, had thought about the selection of their child's school and had been able to enroll their child in the school that was their first choice. Only 57 percent of public school parents reported that they had thought about the matter and that they were satisfied with their choice.

One tentative conclusion we can draw from these data, therefore, is that those parents who choose to send their children to independent schools, especially those parents who transfer their children from public to independent schools, do so because their higher social standing enables them to be more aware of alternatives to public education and allows them to feel that independent schooling is an accessible type of education for their child.

D. Effects of Aid on Choice

A direct question concerning the influence of B.C.'s program of aid to independent schools elicited an overwhelming 96.4 percent response to the effect that the aid program did not influence the decision. This response is probably an accurate reflection of reality, since the aid had begun only a month before the children were enrolled in the schools in question. Many parents made their decisions considerably before the start of school, and thus could not have been influenced by the program. Those

who were aware of the program at the time of decision would not have been in a position to predict its consequences.

We attempted to ascertain the effect that the aid might have in the future, in case it were used either to reduce independent school fees or to prevent fee increases. When we asked whether independent school patrons were actually paying fees, only 10 of the 472 parents responding to the question said they were not. Of all patrons responding to a further question, 40 percent said they found the fees to be a considerable burden. The proportion of parents complaining of the burden varied by school type and was directly related to the magnitude of the fees charged by each school type.

When we asked whether independent school patrons would reconsider their choice of an independent school if fees were increased by $200 per year, $350 per year, or $500 per year, the results were as follows: Approximately one-third of the parents said they would reconsider their decision to patronize an independent school if costs increased by $200 per year, another third said they would reconsider if costs were increased by $350 to $500 per year, and the remaining third said they would not reconsider, even if costs were increased as much as $500 per year as indicated in Column 1 of Table 4.

There were notable differences between different types of schools. Twenty-one of the 30 non-sectarian school parents (70 percent) said they would not reconsider given any of these increases. The magnitude of such increases, however, is not large in proportion to current tuition fees in that school.

Parents of Catholic school children, who paid the lowest fees, were

Table 4

Proportion of Parents Who Would Reconsider Decision if Costs Went Up, Comparing Types of Schools

Increase	Total		Catholic		Other Church		Non-sectarian	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
$200	37.2	(147)	43.2	(111)	28.7	(31)	16.7	(5)
$350	54.4	(68)	61.5	(47)	48.1	(21)	16.7	(0)
$500	62.8	(33)	69.6	(21)	55.8	(8)	30.0	(4)
NO	37.2	(147)	30.4	(78)	44.4	(48)	70.0	(21)
TOTALS		395		257		108		30

% of yes cumulative

most likely to reconsider if confronted with a $200 per year increase, and the percentage who would reconsider increased from 43.2 percent to 61.5 percent when the prospective increase was $350. A bit over a quarter of the other church-related school parents indicated they would reconsider at $200, and nearly half would at $350. At each level, Catholic school parents were most likely to reconsider, and non-sectarian school parents least likely, with other-church-school parents falling in between. Note that the percentages in this table are cumulative.

Thus, there seems to be a direct and consistent relationship between the willingness to reconsider given an increase in costs on the one hand, and the ratio of the increase to the current tuition, on the other.

A control was run by income (see Table 5), to see whether income made any difference in the point at which a parent would reconsider.

Table 5

Proportion of Parents Who Would Reconsider if Costs Went Up, Controlling for Income

Increase	Income $9,999 & Under		Income $10,000-$19,999		Income $20,000 & Over		Total	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
$200	47.6	(10)	44.0	(51)	21.0	(37)	31.3	(98)
$350	61.9	(3)	63.8	(23)	35.8	(26)	47.9	(52)
$500	61.9	(0)	69.8	(7)	56.0	(35)	61.3	(42)
NO	38.1	(8)	30.2	(35)	44.0	(78)	38.7	(121)
TOTALS		21		116		176		313

% of yes cumulative

Not surprisingly, it did. The few low income respondents were quite similar to the middle income respondents in the probable dropout rate at each level of cost increase. Fewer high income respondents, however, would reconsider given a $200 per year increase. Reconsideration given increases between $200 and $350 was about the same as in the other income groups, and at $500 was considerably greater. However, even given a $500 increase, a lower proportion of the high income group than of the other groups would reconsider.

E. What Parents Looked For

In addition to investigating <u>how</u> parents chose schools, we sought to discover <u>why</u> they preferred the various schools they selected. The bulk of our information on this subject comes from responses to the following

questions:

Movers were asked, "What are the main reasons why you are sending (this child) to (this school)?"

Starters were asked, "What are the main reasons why you prefer (name of school) to other schools in this area?"

Interviewers were instructed to probe for up to five responses and record them verbatim. By asking these open-ended questions near the beginning of the telephone interviews, we were able to elicit reasons from parents before presenting any material which might bias the responses.

The responses were then coded into one of 147 categories designed to capture all the nuances of the data. In order to facilitate analysis, however, these categories were collapsed into a simpler and more comprehensible system of 16 categories, using criteria of logical consistency.[13]

The coding system was not designed to determine which of a parent's reasons was most important, but rather, to capture the several reasons of concern to parents. Therefore, the analysis that follows is based on the first three issues mentioned.

Independent Schools

Quite consistently, the reasons most frequently given for choosing an independent rather than a public school were, in the following order: (a) that the school, teachers, parents, or students were more religious or spiritual; (b) that discipline was superior; and (c) that the academic quality was superior. Since, however, all but one of the independent schools in our sample are church-related, the first reason may be an artifact of the sample.

Table 6 distinguishes between respondents from public, Catholic, and non-Catholic church-related schools, and the one non-sectarian independent school. As can readily be seen, the reasons for choosing different types of independent schools are quite varied. A graphic presentation of the most prominent reasons given by parents for choosing each type of school appears in Figure 9.

Our data demonstrate that religious elements were most prominent in the choice of church-related schools. On the other hand, they were not mentioned at all as reasons for choosing the non-sectarian school. Indeed, religion was mentioned more often as a reason for choosing a public school than for choosing this school.

Also noteworthy is the fact that religion far outstrips other reasons for choosing the non-Catholic church related schools, whereas it is nearly matched by discipline as a reason for choosing a Catholic school. This less marked tendency of those choosing Catholic schools to mention religion may be related to Vatican II and associated influences, which raised much confusion and dissension among Catholics as to the religious value of a Catholic school. Thus, there may be a much greater tendency than there once was for Catholics to choose Catholic schools for reasons other than religion.[14]

In contrast, virtually all respondents from the non-sectarian school mentioned aspects of strict discipline, placing this factor first for this school. A strong second is the area of superior academic or teaching quality, with "other" reasons third.

The reasons given for selecting this school reflect an accurate perception of the school's qualities. It is one of very few such schools in

Table 6

Reasons for Preferring Different Types of Schools

Reason	Public %	Public (n)	Catholic %	Catholic (n)	Other Church %	Other Church (n)	Nonsectarian %	Nonsectarian (n)	Total Independent %	Total Independent (n)
Academic/Teaching Quality	15.9	(64)	32.4	(104)	18.4	(26)	61.8	(21)	30.4	(151)
Teacher dedication	1.7	(7)	5.9	(19)	9.2	(13)	2.9	(1)	6.7	(33)
Wider range of programs/activities	10.4	(42)	1.9	(6)	0.0	(0)	2.9	(1)	1.4	(7)
Small, individual attention	6.0	(24)	21.8	(70)	9.9	(14)	17.6	(6)	18.1	(90)
Strict discipline	17.9	(72)	51.4	(165)	42.6	(60)	85.3	(29)	51.2	(254)
Religion, spirituality	1.5	(6)	52.6	(169)	71.6	(101)	0.0	(0)	54.4	(270)
Better atmosphere	7.2	(29)	10.3	(33)	16.3	(23)	2.9	(1)	11.5	(57)
Congruent with home	3.2	(13)	8.1	(26)	9.9	(14)	0.0	(0)	8.0	(40)
Enabling features	12.2	(49)	9.3	(30)	6.4	(9)	11.8	(4)	8.7	(43)
Family tradition	8.7	(35)	9.7	(31)	10.6	(15)	17.6	(6)	10.5	(52)
Child prefers school	13.4	(54)	3.1	(10)	9.9	(14)	2.9	(1)	5.0	(25)
Closer, more convenient	43.9	(177)	8.1	(26)	1.4	(2)	0.0	(0)	5.6	(28)
Less costly	11.9	(48)	1.2	(4)	0.7	(1)	0.0	(0)	1.0	(5)
Within district	3.5	(14)	0.3	(1)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.2	(1)
Reasons beyond family control	18.6	(75)	2.5	(8)	0.7	(1)	5.9	(2)	2.2	(11)
Other	21.6	(87)	14.3	(46)	14.2	(20)	52.9	(18)	16.9	(84)
TOTALS		403		321		141		34		496

% based on respondents

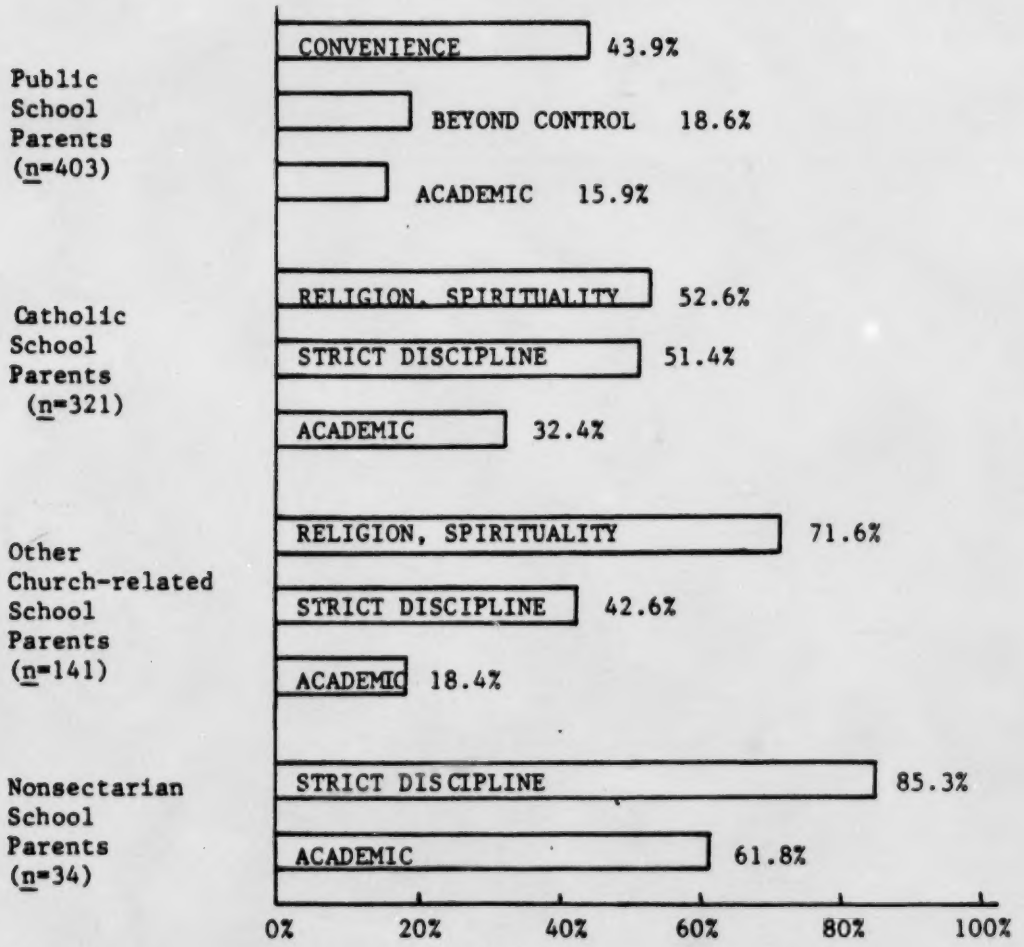


Figure 9

Most prominent reasons for choosing a school, comparing patrons of four types of schools (n=total respondents to question in category.)

the area. Schools of this type have high fees, and are quite selective in their admissions policies, striving for a student body with high academic potential. Their program is college preparatory. Most of them are boarding schools, and require their students to wear uniforms.

Although no parent stated such a reason for selecting this school, these schools have an important latent function in providing "connections" for the youngsters, which will prove invaluable when they reach adulthood and enter key positions in the province, in government and business.

Returning to the church-related schools, we find notable differences between the two types. Catholic schools are chosen for a number of reasons suggesting academic strength. While religion was mentioned by about half the Catholic school parents, so was strict discipline. Academic quality and the presumed benefits of small size (which are thought to enhance academic achievement) were the third and fourth most prominent reasons for preferring Catholic schools. This combination suggests that, while religion is important to parents of Catholic school children, so is a desire that the children do well in school.

Religion, however, is even more important to those who choose other church-related schools than it is to Catholic school parents, if one can judge from the fact that 71.6 percent of the parents patronizing this type of school mentioned it. Discipline and academic quality are mentioned by these parents second and third most often, but not nearly as frequently as they are mentioned by Catholic school parents. Moreover, a better atmosphere, which implies a concern with the moral and social climate, rather than academic achievement, is mentioned fourth most often by patrons of this type of school.

In sum, one gets the impression that the morally safe atmosphere religious schools provide is somewhat more important to those who choose non-Catholic schools than to those who choose Catholic schools. Catholic schools, in contrast, are chosen somewhat more often for their ability to promote academic achievement.

This hypothesis is corroborated by data on non-Catholics who chose Catholic schools, as Table 7 demonstrates. The columns in this table are not mutually exclusive. The first and fifth columns, showing the response rates of Catholic school and public school parents, are the same as in Table 6. Columns 2 and 4 combined comprise all those in our sample identifying themselves as Catholics, while columns 2 and 3 represent all Catholic school respondents. Many of the Catholics in column 4 are also public school respondents tabulated in column 5.

The data suggest that the non-Catholics who chose Catholic schools did so for rather different reasons than the Catholics who chose those schools. Strict discipline, while important to both groups, was far more important to the non-Catholics. Indeed, it was a reason given by over 60 percent of non-Catholics for choosing a Catholic school, the most prominent by far. In contrast, only about half of the Catholics choosing these schools mentioned discipline, whereas 64.2 percent named religious reasons. The reason given second most often by non-Catholics was academic quality, whereas this was third for Catholics, mentioned by only two-thirds as many (proportionally). Small size was a fairly prominent reason in both groups, and non-Catholics mentioned aspects of plant and administration (coded here as "enabling features") considerably more often than Catholics did. In sum, non-Catholics who favor Catholic schools apparently see these

Table 7

Reasons Catholics and Non-Catholics Choose Catholic Schools;
Reasons Catholics Choose Non-Catholic Schools

Reason	All Catholic School Respondents		Catholics in Catholic Schools		Catholics in Other Schools		Non-Catholics in Catholic Schools		All Public School Respondents	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Academic/Teaching Quality	32.4	(104)	28.8	(69)	43.2	(35)	9.9	(14)	15.9	(64)
Teacher dedication	5.9	(19)	5.0	(12)	8.6	(7)	1.4	(2)	1.7	(7)
Wider range of program/activities	1.9	(6)	2.1	(5)	1.2	(1)	14.8	(21)	10.4	(42)
Small, individual attention	21.8	(70)	21.7	(52)	22.2	(18)	4.2	(6)	6.0	(24)
Strict discipline	51.4	(165)	48.3	(116)	60.5	(49)	25.4	(30)	17.9	(72)
Religion, spirituality	52.6	(169)	64.2	(154)	18.5	(15)	1.4	(2)	1.5	(6)
Better atmosphere	10.3	(33)	9.6	(23)	12.3	(10)	9.9	(14)	7.2	(29)
Congruent with home	8.1	(26)	7.9	(19)	8.6	(7)	3.5	(5)	3.2	(13)
Enabling features	9.3	(30)	7.5	(18)	14.8	(12)	8.5	(12)	12.2	(49)
Family tradition	9.7	(31)	11.7	(28)	3.7	(3)	8.5	(12)	8.7	(35)
Child prefers school	3.1	(10)	4.2	(10)	0.0	(0)	15.5	(22)	13.4	(54)
Closer, more convenient	8.1	(26)	8.3	(20)	7.4	(6)	46.5	(66)	43.9	(177)
Less costly	1.2	(4)	0.8	(2)	2.5	(2)	10.6	(15)	11.9	(48)
Within district	0.3	(1)	0.0	(0)	1.2	(1)	3.5	(5)	3.5	(14)
Reasons beyond family control	2.5	(8)	2.5	(6)	2.5	(2)	17.6	(25)	18.6	(75)
Other	14.3	(46)	14.2	(34)	4.8	(12)	19.7	(28)	21.6	(87)
TOTALS		321		240		81		142		403

% based on respondents

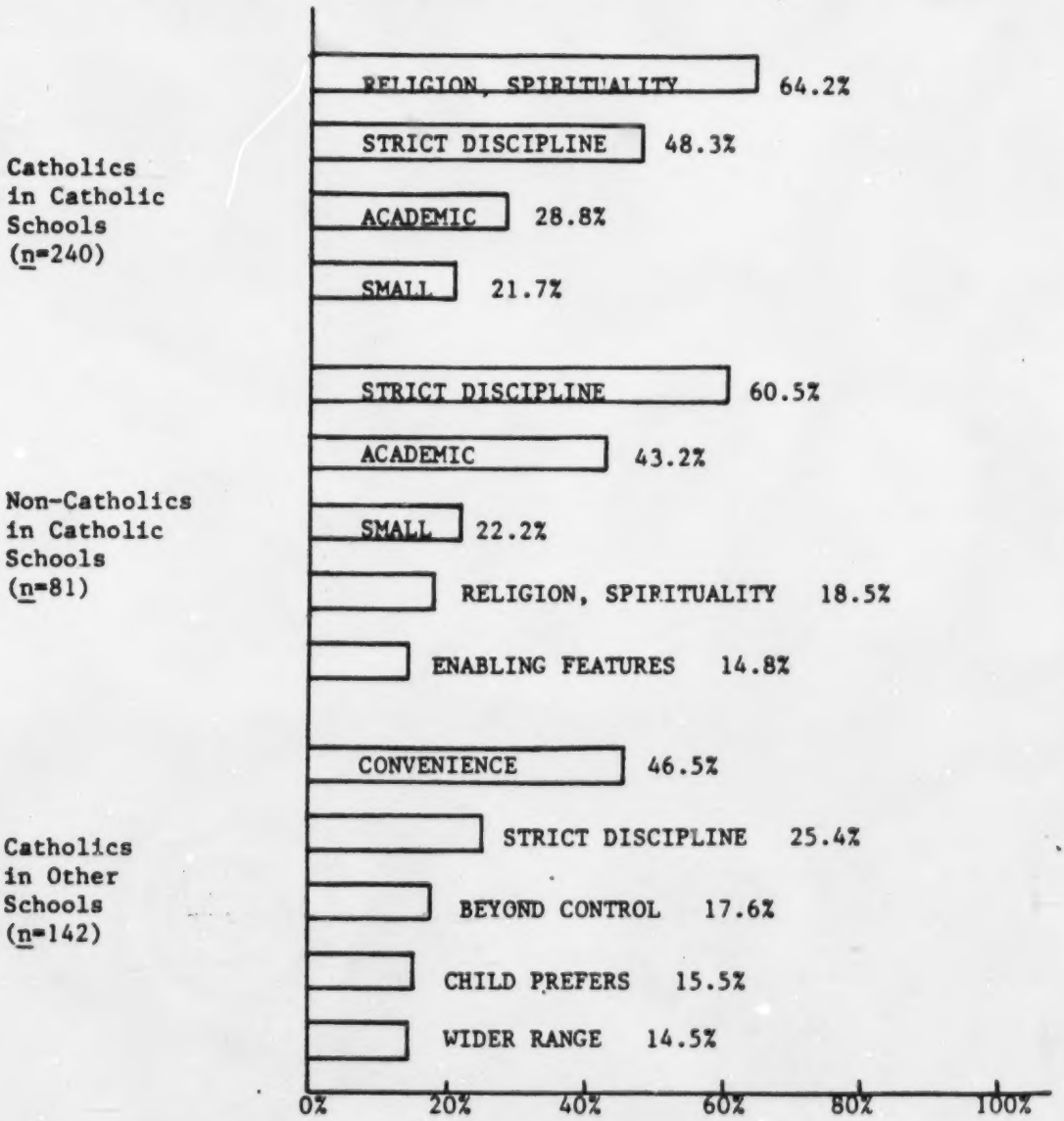


Figure 10

Most prominent reasons for choosing a Catholic school, comparing Catholics and non-Catholics; reasons Catholics choose non-Catholic schools (n=total respondents to question in category.)

schools as academically superior, well-disciplined, and well-run schools.

The fourth most prominent reason for non-Catholics was religion. This suggests that many of these respondents felt a Catholic school was preferable to a secular public school, because it is preferable to have some religious atmosphere in one's child's school than none, even if the religion is not one's own.

(One alternative possibility should also be noted. Since we asked for the respondent's religious preference, rather than the family's, some of the "non-Catholics" in the Catholic schools may be married to Catholics, and committed to raising their children in the Catholic faith.)

It is also notable that none of the non-Catholics choosing Catholic schools did so because of the child's preference for that type of school, and, less surprisingly, that considerably fewer non-Catholics than Catholics chose these schools for reasons having to do with family tradition.

In contrast, Catholics who chose non-Catholic schools gave very different reasons for their choice. Their pattern of preferences is similar to that of public school parents as a group (which should not be surprising, since many of this group in fact enrolled their children in public schools).

Public Schools

Public school parents gave quite different reasons for their choice of school. Most frequently given was that the school is closeby or convenient. Because of our coding system, however, such responses may indicate that, having decided on a public school for whatever reasons, the one these parents actually patronized was the one in whose attendance district they resided.

Other reasons not classified were next most frequently given. Among the reasons named by over 15 percent of public school parents were reasons beyond their control (implying perhaps that another school was preferred), and the strict discipline and high academic quality mentioned by the independent school parents.

There was much greater agreement among independent school parents than among public school parents as to the reasons for selecting a school. The two aspects of a school mentioned most often by independent school parents as reasons for their choice, religion and strict discipline, were both mentioned far more often than any reason for choosing a public school. Public school responses were more varied. This suggests the possibility that one of the strengths of public schools may be their heterogeneity.

Variations by Social Class

The reasons given by parents for choosing schools of different types were not associated with social class to any marked degree. Both when parents in various social strata were compared and when social class groups and school types were considered simultaneously, the most striking result was the lack of association between parents' reasons and social class.

Using socioeconomic measures other than social class, there was a definite tendency for a desire for strict discipline to vary directly with status. This appeared most clearly relative to income. However, since the working class respondents in our sample tended to have high incomes, there may not be any contradiction with our social class data, which showed no such tendency.

There was virtually no variation by social class in the reasons for

choosing independent schools. Strict discipline and a religious atmosphere are by far the two most important reasons at all levels, with academic quality a consistent third.

All classes of public school parents mentioned reasons coded as "convenience" most frequently. There is some variability by social class in the order in which other reasons are named. It is worth noting that the upper-middle class, which, as mentioned earlier, is the class most likely to involve the child in the decision, is also the class most likely to name the child's preference as a reason for their selection.

There are a few interesting minor variations. Although the numbers are too small to be taken very seriously, the lower class parents mentioned academic quality as a reason for choosing an independent school considerably more often (proportionately) than did the other parents. And when we looked at income, father's occupation, and father's level of education (instead of our social class index), the lowest group on each of these measures was likely to mention strict discipline as a reason for choosing an independent school more frequently than did other groups. While we noted that a preference for strict discipline varied directly with income, that was when public and independent schools were considered together.

The latter minor tendencies suggest that if parents at the lower end of the status hierarchy choose independent schools for their children, they may do so from an unusual concern for improving their children's status by means of superior academic achievement. Shifting the point of view, it may be that independent schools filter out parents from the lower strata who have no strong mobility aspirations for their children.

Reasons for Transferring a Child

We compared movers and starters, to see whether there was any evidence that would illuminate the reasons parents chose to transfer a child from one type of school to another. Since, in our coding system, anything that movers said about their old school was coded in reference to their preferred school, we cannot infer directly from this body of data anything about the actual reason the movers decided to change schools. However, some reasons for changing schools can be inferred from data collected on the process of choosing.

Although twice as many movers as starters said that they made their choice in response to an event, only 35.5 percent of the movers indicated that they were so prompted, and there was a considerable variation as to the nature of the event that prompted the choice. We also know, however, that many more movers than starters, when asked how the child was involved in the decision, indicated either that the choice was the child's, or that the choice was made by the parents on the basis of the child's preference. Of the movers who answered this question, 26.9 percent gave such a response, compared with 15.3 percent of the starters.

Some reasons for transferring a child from one type of school to another can be inferred from the reasons for choice given more frequently by movers than by starters, which can be observed in Table 8. (These are not necessarily the reasons given most frequently by either subsample, which are the same as those for the whole sample, though not necessarily in the same order, and which are displayed in Figure 11.) Specifically, desire for a wider range of programs, the child's preference for the new school, and lower cost were all named by at least 6 percent more movers than starters

Table 8

Reasons for Preference, Comparing Movers and Starters

Reason	Movers		Starters	
	%	(n)	%	(n)
Academic/teaching quality	21.1	(104)	27.3	(111)
Teacher dedication	3.0	(15)	6.1	(25)
Wider range of programs/ activities	8.1	(40)	2.2	(9)
Small, individual attention	10.0	(49)	16.0	(65)
Strict discipline	38.0	(187)	34.2	(139)
Religion, spirituality	20.9	(103)	42.5	(173)
Better atmosphere	7.7	(38)	11.8	(48)
Congruent with home	3.3	(16)	9.1	(37)
Enabling features	10.2	(50)	10.3	(42)
Family tradition	8.3	(41)	11.3	(46)
Child prefers school	12.6	(62)	4.2	(17)
Closer, more convenient	23.6	(116)	21.9	(89)
Less costly	10.2	(50)	0.7	(3)
Within district	1.8	(9)	1.5	(6)
Reasons beyond family control	14.0	(69)	17.9	(73)
Other	21.1	(104)	18.1	(74)
TOTALS		492		407

% based on respondents

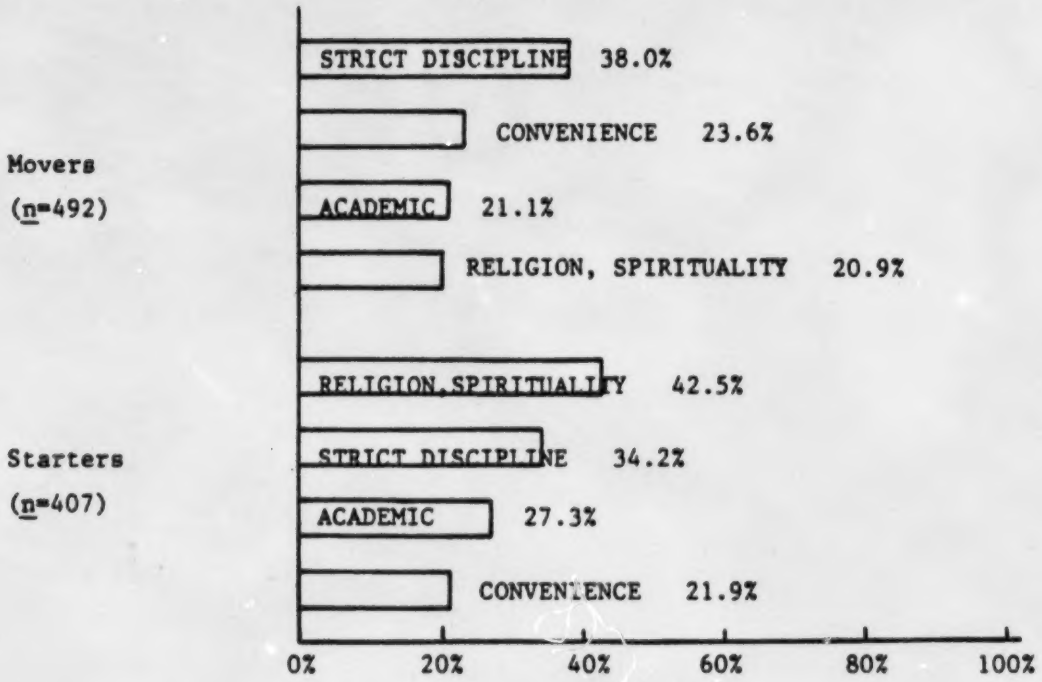


Figure 11
Most prominent reasons for choosing a school, comparing movers and starters (n=total respondents to question in category.)

(though none was mentioned by more than 12 percent of either subsample). These patterns are easily understood.

When one starts a child in school, one doesn't necessarily know what aspect of school will be most salient for that child. Thus, first choices of school may be made on the basis of what might be called convictions, such as a desire that one's child have religious training appropriate to one's faith. (This possibility is supported by the fact that twice as many starters as movers mentioned religion as a reason for their selection.) However, once the child has attended a school for a period of time, he or she may find the school lacking in some respects. This may account for the greater tendency of movers to mention both the child's preference and

the desire for a wider range of programs. Given the nature of the responses that were coded into the latter category, such a response may simply mean that the child showed a strong interest in a particular subject area or activity that the former school did not provide.

We surmise that the decision to change schools because of cost may reflect a situation in which a family, caught in an inflationary spiral, finds that it can no longer devote its discretionary income to nonpublic education. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of concern with education.

Looking at the other side of the coin, reasons named by at least 6 percent more starters than movers include religion (as noted), academic quality, and small size. The latter two reasons resemble religion as a reason in that they may well reflect general attitudes concerning education, without reference to the needs of a particular child. Other things being equal, one wants a quality education for one's child, and there is a widely held belief that smaller classes and greater individual attention are more conducive to learning. It is only when other things are not equal that other factors become important and one contemplates a change.

Data on movers and starters were also controlled by socioeconomic variables, but these analyses produced no consistent results.

What Students Consider Important

Finally, we examined some data from an earlier survey which we conducted in the spring of 1978. In that survey, students were asked to reply "True" or "False" in response to the assertion, "I often wish I could be in another school." Some 40 percent of independent school students and 25 percent of public school students responded affirmatively. The students who

responded affirmatively (that they did often want to be in another school), were then asked to indicate, in their own words, why they felt that way. The students' reasons for wanting a particular school (or type of school) are quite different from those given by parents.

While a notable proportion of students (especially those in public schools) complained that some other school would be superior academically, a nearly equal number (especially in independent schools) complained that their schools were too academic, maintaining too much pressure for grades or assigning work that was too hard. There is some likelihood, then, that the very schools which many parents prefer for academic reasons are the schools that students regard as burdensome.

A wider range of subjects, more activities, or more specialized subjects, were desired by a large proportion of the students, especially students (over 40 percent of those wanting to leave) in independent secondary schools. Parents did not mention these concerns nearly so frequently.

In the matter of discipline, too, many students may be in overt or covert disagreement with their parents. A fairly large percentage of independent school students who wanted to leave felt the discipline in their schools was too strict. A few additional students complained that the atmosphere was too religious.

Another concern about which parents and students differed was the size of the school. Parents tended to prefer small schools, so that students could receive more individual attention. Students, on the other hand, indicated that they would prefer a larger school, so that they could meet new people, enjoy a wider range of programs, and avoid overcrowding.

Many elementary students had complaints about their schools'

atmosphere, ranging from things such as a lack of caring by the teachers, to boredom, to displeasure with the dress code. Quite a few secondary independent students would have preferred a coeducational school. Other matters voiced by the students included a desire to attend school with their friends, a wish for new experiences, a dislike of the teachers, and a lack of adequate facilities or of good organization.

F. Conclusions and Implications

In the passages that follow, our interpretations are limited to broad issues and themes, with special emphasis on the implications of our evidence for British Columbia's aid to independent schools.

We begin by stressing several generally overlooked differences among independent schools of various types, along with some implications of those differences. With that necessary backdrop, we address the major purpose of all our British Columbia work—to assess the discernable and preditable effects of aid to independent schools. Finally, we discuss the research that remains to be done on the decision-making of parents as they choose schools for their children, in the context of B.C.'s aid to independent schools.

Differences Among Independent Schools

Regardless of one's attitude toward aid to independent schools, thought and discussion on the topic will be more informed if differences among independent schools are kept in mind. Some are church-related, and some nonsectarian. Their fees differ across a wide range. Their patrons are attracted for different reasons, come from different social classes and probably would be affected in different degrees by changes in tuition. Their patrons describe them, with notable consistency, as displaying

different patterns of strengths and relative weakness; in fact, they may be more heterogeneous as a group than public schools. The known bias in our sample does not seem likely to have distorted evidence of these differences.

It is interesting to observe one specific finding in this connection: Catholic leaders have often asserted that their schools serve roughly the same socioeconomic range of families that public schools serve. Data from the present study are much in line with that assertion. However, we might have found more striking social class differences between public and Catholic schools if we had not been prevented from including urban public schools in the sample.

Consequences of Aid to Independent Schools

Virtually all parents in our independent school sample asserted that aid to independent schools had nothing to do with their choice of a school. That is not surprising, because the very first aid was transmitted to independent schools in August, 1978, less than a month before these parents enrolled their children in the schools discussed in this report. Many parents had selected the schools many months earlier. The people who made their choices at the last minute would probably have been unaware both of the magnitude of the aid (it turned out to average approximately $500 per pupil in the first year, but rumors had mentioned many figures higher and lower than that), and they certainly, in virtually all cases, would have had no idea how the aid would be used.

These data, gathered very early in the aid program, will be compared with data of a highly similar nature gathered early in 1981 to determine whether any changes may logically be attributed to the aid. In the meantime,

it may be helpful to see what our data indirectly suggest about the most likely consequences of the aid. What follows is necessarily speculative, especially since our sample was not designed to permit generalizations about public and independent schools as a whole. If the aid is used to hold constant, or even reduce, the fees charged by independent schools, there is reason to believe that the effects of this policy will be strongest in Catholic schools, whose patrons seem more likely to be affected by changes in tuition in those other types of independent schools. If the aid program has the effect (as it already seems to have had) of making independent schools more visible to the general public, new patrons could be induced to shift to independent schools as a result, for some of our data suggest that awareness of school alternatives is related to the tendency to move, particularly in the direction of independent schools.[15]

The movers in our sample were of higher social status than the starters, exhibiting greater differences along this line than our sample revealed between current patrons of public and independent schools. There is therefore reason to suspect that future shifts in enrollment from public to independent schools will be selective, perhaps even more so than current attendance patterns. This may result in an increased tendency for independent schools to cater to slightly higher strata than are found in public schools.

The magnitude of the aid does not seem likely to induce the movement of many low-income families from public to independent schools. There seems to be little likelihood, based on our sample, that the unthinking parents will shift to independent schools. Characterized, as they seem to be, by negative attitudes toward schools, and probably by more general alienation,

they would probably not make such a change unless deliberate steps were taken to influence them in that direction. The same prophesy appears tentatively warranted in the case of working class parents. Despite their generally high income levels, they are, like the unthinking parents, disproportionately represented in public schools. A major factor behind independent school patronage seems to be decision-making style, rather than income (above a certain level).

Although social class differences between public schools as a whole and independent schools as a whole are far from pronounced at the present time, tendencies to accentuate those differences will bear watching. Otherwise, British Columbia may slowly drift toward a two-tiered system of independent schools for the well-to-do and public schools for the poor. Both the United States and Australia seem to be moving in this direction at present.

The current study was not designed to provide estimates of the proportions of people of different types who are moving from public to independent schools. Such estimates are impossible to derive, as we knew they would be, in the light of our sampling strategies. In our second survey of this type, we sampled the general population of parents with school-age children, and thus should be able to make such estimates in the near future. Meanwhile, B.C. citizens and lawmakers who fear these tendencies should not be unduly concerned in the short run. The aid is limited to independent schools that have been operating for five years or more. That limitation is likely to inhibit seriously the founding of new independent schools, and since existing independent schools in B.C. seem to be nonprofit organizations exclusively, they have little motivation to increase in size. Perhaps

by the time the results of our second survey have been analyzed, some strategies for the improvement of the province's entire educational enterprise, public and private, will suggest themselves.

Needed Further Research

Our efforts along this line are obviously far from complete at present. As noted, our second survey on this topic involved a sample of the general population of parents with school-age children, so estimates can be made of the proportions of that population exhibiting many of the characteristics identified in the present study. We think there may be important differences between elementary and secondary schools in the areas considered here, and even differences in the way schools are selected for girls rather than boys.[16] We would like to explore the consequences for the many children who appear to be attending schools in isolation from most of their close friends, or attending schools their parents prefer but they themselves dislike. We need to learn much more about the factors that keep parents from patronizing the schools of their choice, and about the consequences of that frustration. We need to understand the parents who describe themselves as not thinking much about the choice of a school, but also as seriously dissatisfied. On the surface, at least, they look like terribly alienated, apathetic people. We have data to permit some of this work as soon as time and resources allow, but most of it depends on information now being gathered. We should have much more to report a few months hence.

NOTES

1. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the British Columbia Ministry of Education, which provided funds to the Educational Research Institute of British Columbia to acquire the data for this study; and the the National Institute of Education for funds to cover the designing of the research and analyzing the data. Thanks are also due Patricia L. Busk, who performed all the statistical analysis; Ilona Bovar, Jane Smalley, Thomas Maguire, John German, and Eric Reed who coded the data; Emily Li, who designed and executed the graphic presentations; and Leslie T. McNally, who typed the manuscript.

2. Donald A. Erickson and Jonathan Kamin, How Parents Select Schools for Their Children: Evidence from 993 Parents in British Columbia (San Francisco and Vancouver: Center for Research on Private Education and Educational Research Institute of British Columbia, August 1980).

3. Copies may be obtained from the Institute for the Study of Private Schools, School of Education, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94117.

4. Class was measured using a variation of August Hollingshead's Index of Social Position. We divided our sample into upper-middle, lower-middle, working, and lower classes.

5. Melvin L. Kohn, "Social Class and Parent-Child Relationships: An Interpretation," in Robert Lejeune (ed.), Class and Conflict in American Society (Chicago: Markham, 1972), p. 114.

6. Herbert J. Gans, The Urban Villagers (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), pp. 229-248.

7. Ibid.; Kohn, loc. cit.; Bernard Barber, Social Stratification: A Comparative Analysis of Structure and Process (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957), p. 272.

8. John R. Seeley, R. Alexander Sim, and Elizabeth W. Loosley, Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life (New York: Wiley, 1963), p. 185.

9. Gans, op cit., p. 247.

10. This possibility is at least inferentially supported by our finding that those who give little thought to the selection of a school as noted later in this report are likely both to have been educated in public schools and to let the child choose the school. They also overwhelmingly place their children in public schools.

There were no significant differences between Catholics and non-Catholics in response to this question, indicating that the effect noted above, concerning Catholic schools, has more to do with the type of school than the religion of the chooser.

11. James C. Carper, "In the Way He Should Go: An Overview of the Christian Day School Movement," Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science 4:2 (1980):118-131.

12. Very early in his work, Simon developed concepts of "the limits of rationality" and "satisficing." See Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1945); James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, Organizations (New York: Wiley, 1958).

13. It was discovered shortly before this report was completed that, when the original coding categories were collapsed, a significant error was made. The coding category for "teachers do not know their subject matter" was placed in the category "Academic/Teaching Quality," while the code for "teachers know their subject matter" was omitted entirely. If this error were corrected, the percentage of parents mentioning academic/teaching quality would undoubtedly be increased by a small but indeterminate amount.

14. See Mary Perkins Ryan, Are Parochial Schools the Answer? Catholic Education in the Light of the Council (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964) for further elucidation on this point.

15. Some confirmation of this possibility appears in R. Gary Bridge and Julie Blackman, A Study of Alternatives in American Education, Vol. IV: Family Choice in Schooling (Santa Monica, Ca.: RAND Corp., 1978).

16. Bridge and Blackman (op. cit.) also provide some evidence for this possibility.